

# Can Science And Spirituality Unlock The Brain's Full Potential? : A Conversation With Dr Tara Swart



Tapping the unharnessed potential of the mind has been the holy grail of both science and spirituality and neuroscientist Dr Tara Swart's book *The Source* surprisingly brings together both. The book attempts to explain how the human mind is actually the source of 'manifesting' all 'miracles', because, contrary to popular perception, the brain can and does have the ability to change itself in every stage of life. She uses cognitive science to show how concepts that have hitherto been obscured in the metaphysical realm are actually backed by actual, explainable processes inside our minds and bodies. A former psychiatrist, leadership coach and award-winning author, Swart has a PhD in neuroscience and is a senior lecturer at MIT Sloan and Kings College London.

## **How did you first begin to think of applying the principles of neuroscience to leadership and to the realization of one's dreams?**

The brain is essentially the CEO of the body so just as it is good to know the motivation and preferences of your leader, it is beneficial to all of us to understand how our brains work. In business and leadership positions, people are essentially being paid to use their brains, so it is very important to know how to get the most out of it and optimize performance. Having consulted mostly in financial and professional services for 10 years, I wanted to apply the same neuroscience principles to help people in all areas of life to realize their dreams. That is when I began to write *The Source*.

## **How does neuroscience relate to concepts such as 'law of attraction', 'visualization' and 'manifestation', which have, at best, been considered within the metaphysical sphere?**

The neuroscience concepts of 'selective attention' and 'value tagging' relate to the 'law of attraction', visualization and manifestation. Because we are bombarded with so much information on a daily basis, our brain filters out a lot of what is seen as not relevant to our survival (selective attention). It then tags in order of importance, the data that it has selected to help us thrive (value tagging). Positively directed thoughts and mental images of our goals and desires—the things we want in life—help us notice opportunities that we may otherwise have missed. Raising in our consciousness the things that we wish to attract and using visual imagery to make an impression on our subconscious is key to manifesting our goals.

## **How would you explain neuroplasticity as it relates to the actualization of the brain's potential?**

Neuroplasticity is the ability of the brain to change itself throughout life, as well as the fact that our brains are constantly shaped and moulded by our experiences. Every smell, every emotion, and every person that we meet impacts us. By keeping our brains flexible through new experiences, new learning and aerobic exercise we can boost the brain's 'executive' functions (emotional regulation, bias suppression, complex problem solving, creative thinking). And by being mindful of the experiences we expose our brains to, we can reach our fullest potential. From simple lifestyle factors like sleep, diet and hydration, to more complex factors like reducing stress and managing our relationships (nurturing the good ones and removing the toxic ones) we can actualize our best self through the power of neuroplasticity.

## **Your book speaks about the brain–body connection for manifesting one's visions, and the yin–yang balance of the brain. Could you tell us more about that?**

There are six major factors to an agile brain that can powerfully manifest your dreams. 'Know yourself' (the brain–body connection) is one of them. This relates to listening to messages from your own body (everything from indigestion to the hairs on your arm standing up) as well as relating to the body language of others. The others are:

- Master your feelings (emotions)
- Trust your gut (intuition)
- Make good decisions (logic)
- Stay resilient to achieve your goals (motivation)
- Create your life (innovation)

The yin–yang refers to balancing all six of these, particularly emotion and logic.

## **How does science, especially cognitive science, relate to spirituality, considering many scientists have been spiritually inclined themselves?**

People, including scientists, that understand the deep connection between physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and wealth, have cracked the code to living life consciously and with continual personal development in all four areas. Consciousness and personal evolution are both spiritual and scientific concepts. We do not have to choose one belief system, as the latest cognitive science, backed up by scanning technology, helps to explain and further promote the benefits of spirituality. For example, mindfulness meditation, which is practised by over 80 per cent of successful leaders, has been proven to reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol, improve resilience, and even increase the density of folding in the outer layer of the brain. People who do yoga three times a week have lower cortisol levels than people of the same age who do not.

***To read an excerpt from the book, [click here](#).***